

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
1600 - 9th STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

Press Release

contact: Nora A. Romero, Chief
Office of Community & Consumer Relations
(916) 654-2309 Fax: (916) 654-3198

September 3, 1998

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE 1998-99 BUDGET WILL ENHANCE CHILDRENS TREATMENT PROGRAM AT METROPOLITAN STATE HOSPITAL

Sacramento—Additional staff and a playground will enhance the treatment program and recreational activities for the children at Metropolitan State Hospital it was announced today by Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., Director of the Department of Mental Health.

As a result of the budget recently signed by Governor Pete Wilson, a total of \$1,144,000 will be available to enhance the childrens treatment program at Metropolitan State Hospital. The funding will be used for the following projects: \$899,000 towards hiring an additional 23 level-of-care positions which will include nursing and rehab therapists; \$191,000 will fund the development of an open space recreational area; and \$54,000 to purchase and install a play system.

The additional 23 level-of-care positions provided in this budget will accommodate the treatment, security and safety concerns surrounding the care and rehabilitation of the children and youth and provide the supervision necessary for the children to benefit from outdoor recreational therapy.

“The hospital can now make plans to install a 10’ high chainlink fence in the grassy area adjacent to the children’s living units to create a play area. This area is perfectly suited for a ball field, volleyball, and basketball courts including an area for playground equipment for the younger children. The fenced in area will provide the children with more opportunities to go outside at different times of the day to an area that can be easily supervised by staff. This access to outdoors over a longer duration will allow the children and youth to experience normal recreational activities in a safe environment,” said Dr. Mayberg.

“We believe this will have a more normalizing and positive impact on the behavior of the children,” said Dr. Mayberg. “Now that the budget is signed, the hospital can go out to bid on this project. We hope to have the recreational area completed for the children’s use by Christmas.”

For more than thirty years, the Department of Mental Health has provided state hospital services to children and adolescents referred by county mental health programs. Special housing units and educational facilities were designed for the youth services programs at some of the hospitals, but not at Metropolitan State Hospital (MSH).

The Child and Adolescent Treatment Center at MSH opened on June 1, 1997 with the transfer of seventy youth from Camarillo State Hospital and Development Center. Last year, the number of beds purchased by counties for the children's treatment program at Napa State Hospital was at the minimum level and so the program was transferred to Metropolitan State Hospital. In January 1998, youth from Napa State Hospital were transferred to Metropolitan. The units in which the youth reside were originally designed for adult patients and contain no outdoor play areas that are adequate for normal youth recreation as well as secure and manageable by staff. "This budget will allow us to make the needed changes that will enhance the treatment program for the betterment of the kids and staff," said Dr. Mayberg.

Metropolitan State Hospital Child and Adolescent Treatment Center serves children and adolescents, ages 7-17 who are primarily from the Southern California counties. Approximately 80 percent of the patients are admitted from Los Angeles County. The patients served in the Youth Program at MSH represent the most severely and persistently mentally ill children and youth in the State. The typical patient has experienced multiple failed placements, including foster care and group homes and has experienced numerous acute hospitalizations due to behavior that is dangerous to themselves or others. A high level of observation and close supervision in the hospital setting is required for these children.

#

#

#